



Health Facts SUICIDE PREVENTION



Introduction

Suicide has been the second or the third leading cause of death among both Sailors and Marines during the past decade. The tragic loss exacts a heavy toll on the family, friends, unit and command left behind. The military can not afford to lose its members at all—especially to suicide!

A primary cause of suicide is untreated depression. A depressive disorder is an illness that involves the whole body, mood, thoughts, behavior and spirit. It affects the way a person feels about oneself and the way one thinks about others and things. The taking of one's own life tragically demonstrates the terrible psychological pain experienced by a person who has lost all hope — a person who is no longer able to cope with day to day activities — a person who feels there is no solution to their problem — a person who wants to end the pain by ending their own life.

Suicide Facts

- Over 30,000 people in the United States kill themselves every year. Currently, suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- Everyday, approximately 80 Americans take their own life, and 1,500 make an attempt.
- More than four times as many men as women die by suicide, although women report attempting suicide during their lifetime about three times as often as men.
- Suicide by firearm is the most common method for both men and women, accounting for 57 percent of all suicides in 2000.
- White men accounted for 73 percent of all suicides and 80 percent of all firearm suicides.

What are the warning signs you should look for?

- Individual talking about suicide
- Statements about hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness
- Preoccupation with death
- Suddenly happier, calmer
- Loss of interest in things one cares about
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order
- Giving valuable and important things away

What should you do if someone tells you they are thinking about suicide?

Most suicides give some warning of their intentions. The best way to prevent a friend or loved one from taking their life is to recognize when someone is at risk, take the warning signs seriously and know what to do. People may consider suicide when they are hopeless and unable to see alternative solutions to problems. If someone is in imminent danger of harming himself or herself, do not leave the person alone. Contact your Command, Doctor, Corpsman, a Chaplain or a family member right away! Go with them to seek help!

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Here are some ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide:

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Do not be sworn to secrecy. Seek help.
- Take action. Remove means, such as guns or stockpiled pills. Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.



Depression Checklist

It is normal to feel some of the following symptoms from time to time, but experiencing several or more for more than two or three weeks may indicate the presence of depression or other difficulties. Remember, depression is a chemical imbalance in the brain that can only be diagnosed by a medical professional. This checklist is provided as a tool to help you talk with your doctor about your concerns and develop an action plan for treatment.

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| • I feel sad all the time. | • I feel disorganized, like my head is spinning. |
| • I feel like crying a lot. | • I don't feel like talking anymore - |
| • I feel alone. | • I just don't have anything to say. |
| • I don't really feel sad, just empty. | • I feel my life has no direction. |
| • I don't have confidence in myself. | • I feel life isn't worth living. |
| • I don't like myself. | • I consume alcohol/take drugs regularly. |
| • I can't concentrate. | • Loss of or lack of energy |
| • I have a hard time remembering. | |

Much of this kind of suffering is unnecessary. Depression is treatable and as a result, suicide is preventable. Love yourself or a friend enough not to keep thoughts of suicide a secret. Talk to your family, friends or other special people in your life. They can help you find solutions to your problems! Remember, it is always all right to ask for help!

For more information on this and other health and wellness topics, visit Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) at <http://www.nko.navy.mil> or the Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC) at <http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp>.